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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

NEA FOR BURNS/SATTERFIELD
NEA/SA/EX FOR AUSTIN-FERGUSON; DEPT FOR DS/IP/NEA;
DEPT FOR DS/IP/ITA; DRL FOR A/S CRANER;
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USAID FOR DCHA, DCHA/FPP

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TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [CASC](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [GZ](#)

SUBJECT: THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND MARCH 22, 2004 --
(1500 HOURS LOCAL) -- HAMAS LEADER SHAYKH YASIN AND SIX
OTHER PALESTINIANS KILLED IN IAF MISSILE ATTACK IN GAZA
CITY MARCH 22

1. (SBU) Summary: The IAF assassinated Hamas leader Shaykh Ahmad Yasin in a missile attack in Gaza City March 22; six other Palestinians were killed and 19 were wounded in the attack (details reported septel). All entry and exit into the Gaza Strip was stopped for Palestinians March 22 in the wake of the attack. UNRWA reported that five Palestinians were killed during an IDF incursion into Khan Yunis March 21, and five other Palestinians, two of them children, were killed in incidents throughout the Gaza Strip March 20-22. In addition to those wounded in the IDF attack on Shaykh Yasin, a total of 18 Palestinians and four IDF soldiers were injured March 20-22 in the Gaza Strip. Due to technical difficulties, the March 22 SitRep is being submitted individually by Embassy Tel Aviv and ConGen Jerusalem. End Summary.

Gaza Strip

2. (SBU) ATTACKS:

-- Deaths/Injuries: The IAF launched six missiles into a car carrying Hamas spiritual leader Shaykh Ahmad Yasin March 22, killing Yasin, two of his bodyguards and four other Hamas members (Tel Aviv septel). A total of 19 Palestinians were wounded in the attack, according to UNRWA.

-- Deaths/Injuries: A 13-year-old Palestinian boy was shot and killed, and five other Palestinians were wounded March 22 in clashes with IDF troops near Khan Yunis following the assassination of Shaykh Yasin, according to UNRWA.

-- Deaths/Injuries: One Palestinian was killed and one was wounded March 22 when the bomb they attempted to fire at an IDF outpost near Gadid settlement exploded prematurely, according to UNRWA.

-- Deaths: UNRWA reported that two Palestinian gunmen were shot and killed by IDF forces March 21 as they tried to reach the Kissufim Road. One of the men killed was a member of PIJ and the other was from the military wing of Fatah, according to UNRWA.

-- Death: UNRWA reported that a nine-year-old Palestinian girl, shot and seriously wounded when the IDF fired warning shots into the air March 19 in Khan Yunis, died of her injuries March 20.

-- Deaths: UNRWA reported that five Palestinians were shot and killed March 21 during an IDF incursion into Khan Yunis to arrest a wanted Palestinian (see "Incursions"). The IDF claimed that only one Palestinian had been killed.

-- Injuries: One Palestinian was injured March 22 in clashes with IDF troops south of the Abu Khouli checkpoint following the assassination of Shaykh Yasin.

-- Injuries: Two Palestinians were injured March 22 in clashes with IDF troops near Kfar Darom following the assassination of Shaykh Yasin.

-- Injuries: Two Palestinians were injured in Rafah refugee camp March 22 when Palestinians militants exchanged fire with IDF troops.

-- Injuries: Two Palestinians were wounded March 20 in Khan Yunis when the bomb they were preparing went off prematurely.

-- Injuries: UNRWA reported that four IDF soldiers were lightly injured March 19 near Netzarim when a roadside bomb exploded and overturned the tank in which they were traveling.

-- Injuries: UNRWA reported that five Palestinians were shot

and injured March 19 during an IDF incursion into al-Mughragha, near Netzarim (see "Incursions").

-- Mortars/Rockets: The IDF reported that Palestinians fired seven mortars in the Gaza Strip March 19-21. Mortars and anti-tank missiles were fired near Rafah and Khan Yunis March 22, according to the IDF.

-- Shootings: The IDF reported five shooting attacks throughout the Gaza Strip March 19-21.

13. (SBU) ARRESTS:

-- UNRWA reported that four Palestinians were arrested March 21 during an IDF incursion into the Khan Yunis refugee camp (see "Incursions").

-- UNRWA reported that nine Palestinians were arrested March 19 during an IDF incursion into the al-Mughragha area near Netzarim. Seven of those held were later released.

14. (SBU) INCURSIONS/DEMOLITIONS:

-- UNRWA reported that armed clashes erupted in the al-Mughragha area near Netzarim when three IDF bulldozers, and 26 IDF tanks and jeeps, entered the area March 19. A total of seven houses and seven shops were destroyed, and water pipes and electrical wiring was also damaged. Five Palestinians were shot and injured, and nine Palestinians were arrested. In addition, four IDF soldiers were lightly wounded when a roadside bomb exploded, overturning the tank in which they were traveling. Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack on the tank.

-- UNRWA reported that 20 IDF tanks and jeeps, accompanied by three bulldozers, entered the Abassan village east of Khan Yunis March 21. Palestinian militants fired anti-tank missiles and detonated explosive devices near the Israeli troops; IDF troops demolished three houses and damaged another five, as well as damaging a flour mill and two stores. The IDF claimed they shot one Palestinian who was trying to evade arrest; Palestinians claimed five Palestinians were killed. Four Palestinians were arrested.

15. (SBU) BORDER CROSSINGS/CHECKPOINTS

-- Route Four (Salahadeen Road), the main north-south traffic artery, was open for Palestinians March 20-21. The Road was closed March 22 following the IDF assassination of Hamas leader Shaykh Yasin.

-- The Erez Crossing was open March 21, and 7,391 Palestinian laborers crossed into Israel. All workers must be married and over age 35. The Crossing was closed March 20 and 22. The Erez Industrial Zone was open March 20-21, with 2,495 workers entering the Zone March 20 and 3,619 entering March 21. The Erez Industrial Zone was closed March 22.

-- Sufa Crossing was open for Palestinian workers March 21, and 352 workers crossed. Sufa was also open March 21 for the import into Gaza of aggregates used in construction. Sufa Crossing was completely closed March 20 and 22.

-- Karni Terminal was partially open March 21 for the import and export of goods into the Gaza Strip. It was closed March 20 and 22.

-- Rafah Terminal was open for Palestinian travelers March 20-21. Rafah was closed March 22.

-- Tel al-Sultan Toufah checkpoints were open March 20-21. Both checkpoints were closed March 22.

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